

Amendments to Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 17, Line 1 with the following paragraph:

The above described traffic distribution mechanisms of the present invention may also be utilized in conjunction with the flow protection mechanisms described in co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 09/476,188 by Kwok et al., entitled METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR REDIRECTING NETWORK TRAFFIC, filed on 3 January 2000 and traffic assignment mechanisms are described in concurrently filed U.S. Patent Application No. 09/608,549, filed 30 June 2000 ~~_____ (Attorney Docket No. CISC151)~~ by Tiwana et al., entitled METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR SLOW-STARTING A WEB CACHE SYSTEM, which applications are herein incorporated by reference in their entirety. The flow protection mechanism of the former application generally prevent traffic from being disrupted when a CS enters or exits the cluster. Likewise, the assignment mechanisms of the latter application allow a CS to enter or exit a cluster without disrupting traffic (*e.g.*, by a CS becoming overloaded). These two mechanisms together provide significant flexibility in CS arrangements. For example, one may easily upgrade a CS cluster by adding a high-power CS and/or taking a low-power CS away without causing significant traffic disruption. By way of another example, a cluster may have CS with widely varying capacity since mechanisms for intelligent assigning and/or shedding buckets from a CS are provided. Additionally, a lower incidence of traffic disruptions contributes to the transparency aspect of the CS's. In sum, the traffic distribution mechanisms of the present invention may easily incorporate the flow protection and assignment mechanisms of these two co-pending patent applications.